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CBSE 7201

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Wiki Assignment #1:

Action research describes a method in which the researcher chooses a topic of research, identifies the problem, forms a hypothesis based on prior research and then proposes an intervention suitable to improve or solve the problem.

* Defining the Problem – There are many problems that one can identify in schools. One problem that is seen in schools is the lack of exercise in schools. This lack of exercise is not only injurious to health but it also has an impact on academic achievement of children. Due to lack of funding schools are cutting back on physical education programs or limiting them as much as they can. There is reason to believe that that regular physical activity during childhood and adolescence is associated with improvements in physiological and cognitive abilities. Many schools today are focused on producing scores to meet the needs of standards that they seem to forget that the child needs to be taught as a whole in all domains. It is important for the body to be at a healthy state for the mind to work at its full capacity. A growing number of studies show physical education leads to healthy cognitive development.
* It is also seen that lack of exercise in schools is leading to obesity amongst young

Children. America has been found to be one of the leading nations in obesity. Schools in NYC provide the most of 45 minutes of physical education a week. Many schools also combine 3-4 classes together during this period. This means that out of the 45 minutes, it takes about 15 minutes for the instructors to take attendance and prep the children for the activity. So out of the 45 minutes, children are receiving about 30 minutes of actual physical play. This sends the message to children that schools don’t value physical education as much as they do other subjects like literature and math. Yes, these subjects are important however physical education is just as important and it is imperative for school leaders to implement a more rigorous program that emphasizes the importance of it.

* Is it researchable? The topic of the effects of physical education on health is very much researchable. There are many articles that show the importance of physical education on health and the prevention of obesity.
* Prior Research? - “Schools and Obesity Prevention: Creating School Environments and Policies to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity”, discusses that majority of American children do not eat foods that are healthy to their development. They also do not achieve adequate levels of daily physical exercise. As a result of this more children are overweight today than in any other time in U.S. history. The problem of obesity continues on the rise more than ever before. An entry in the Journal of School Health, Childhood obesity and schools: Evidence from the National Survey of Children’s Health, states that childhood obesity leads into adult obesity. In The Future of children, we can see that some schools have tried to opt into programs to encourage healthy eating however due to budget cuts, running these programs became was almost impossible. Schools have also lost money due to the removal of vending machines with unhealthy snacks. The focus of schools is more shifted towards standardized testing which leaves little time for physical education. According to The Nurse practitioner, the health consequences of being overweight during childhood is huge, and there is also much research that shows that obesity leads to shortened life span as well. Obese children are more likely to develop health conditions that reduce the quality of life through development of elevated cholesterol, elevated systolic blood pressure, hyperinsulinemia, Blount’s disease and other orthopedic difficulties.
* Pros and Cons: There are many pros and cons to this research. According to the article, Experts Weigh Pros and Cons of Screening and Treatment for Childhood Obesity, some people believe that obesity is not as big of an epidemic than it is made out to be. They point to the research study by researchers from the US centers for disease control and prevention (CDC), which states that the percentage of children who are overweight or obese has remained stable since 1999. They also express the concern about unintended consequences for children being treated for overweight, which may include psychological issues and physical effects from long term therapy and drugs such as statins.

A pro in researching the topic of obesity in schools is in the increase quality of life. According to the article How Childhood Obesity Predicts Academic Achievement: A Longitudinal Study, improvements of academic achievement have been linked to two indices of childhood obesity: greater physical activity and body mass index. There is still much research to be done on the matter of how childhood obesity is connected to the mechanisms of academic achievement. The mechanisms include executive functioning (higher order cognitive functions) concentrations (an aspect of executive functioning), and internalizing symptoms (low self-esteem, depressed mood, loneliness, anxiety, and social withdrawal). The article states that greater engagement in physical activities has been associated with higher executive functioning and math achievement in separate studies

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* Current Instructional Strategies? Bloomberg passed legislation to ban big size soda to be served in restaurants. In taking this step he raised awareness that obesity overall has become an issue in NYC. In NYC school, the high prevalence of obesity puts children at risk for developing chronic diseases, increasing health care costs as well as threatens life expectancy. As part of a response to this epidemic the NYC Department of Education as worked to improve the nutritional quality of school food. In A Menu for Health: Changes to New York City School Food, 2001 to 2011, it is stated the schools have revised nutrition standards and school meals and competitive food department staffing. The new regime increased the availability of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy and decreased sugary beverages, and foods high in saturated fats and added sugars. NYC has successfully improved the quality of food services as much as possible however they have much to improve on physical education.
* Practitioners/Theorists? According to the Commentary: childhood education and disparities in adult health--the need for improved theories and better data, “contemporary theories of social inequalities in health seek to elucidate the core principles determining disease distributions and individual susceptibilities to specific disorders”. This means that individuals with lower income are therefore more susceptible to health related issues due to the lack of education and services. According to the journal Childhood intelligence and adult obesity,

Recent studies have shown that childhood intelligence has no direct effect on adult net of education but evolutionary psychologic theories suggest otherwise. “A population ( = 17,419) of British babies has been followed since birth in 1958 in a prospectively longitudinal study. Childhood general intelligence is measured at 7, 11, and 16, and adult BMI and obesity are measured at 51. Childhood general intelligence has a direct effect on adult BMI, obesity, and weight gain, net of education, earnings, mother's BMI, father's BMI, childhood social class, and sex. More intelligent children grow up to eat more healthy foods and exercise more frequently as adults. Childhood intelligence has a direct effect on adult obesity unmediated by education or earnings. General intelligence decreases BMI only in adulthood when individuals have complete control over what they eat”.

* What is your proposed intervention? How will you define (construct) and measure your intervention?

 A method to prevent obesity is to raise awareness of the importance of health. Children and parents need to be involved in not only increasing mental strength and readiness but increasing physical health and readiness as well.

One way in which I can go about solving this situation is teaming up with the school nurse or cook and speaking to a class of children about the importance of health and eating healthy. I will begin by weighing all the children in the class and keep a record of their weight. I will then determine the children who are overweight or even under weight. I will also have the children implement a food journal in their daily routine and record what they eat during the day for a week. I will then implement a plan where children receive 30 minutes of physical education 4-5 times a week (independent variable) for three months. The children will also revive nutritional education in the classroom along with a balanced breakfast for three months. My dependent variable will be to see if the weight of the children changes in this time period. Are the children making healthier food choices? Did the food and exercise increase attention span during class period. What did parents notice?

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